

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 1065

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PO, VT

SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE-VATICAN DISCUSSIONS ON CONCORDAT

REF: LISBON 361

1. PORTUGUESE ATTORNEY GENERAL PINHEIRO FARINHA, WHO IN ROME FOR LAST FEW DAYS, EXPECTED TO CONCLUDE TODAY THIS SEGMENT OF HIS INTENSE DISCUSSIONS ON REVISION PORTUGUESE CONCORDAT WITH VATICAN "FOREIGN MINISTER" ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI. ACCORDING TO PORTUGUESE EMBASSY TO HOLY SEE, PRESENT TALKS LIMITED SOLELY TO ARTICLE 24 OF CONCORDAT, WITH GOP SEEKING TO REMOVE PRESENT LANGUAGE WHICH TOTALLY BANS DIVORCE IN PORTUGAL. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, NO SATISFACTORY FORMULA HAS YET BEEN FOUND AND IT POSSIBLE THAT FURTHER TALKS WILL PROVE NECESSARY. ALTHOUGH RANKING VATICAN OFFICIALS WILL GO NO FURTHER THAN CONFIRM THAT PINHEIRO FARINHA IS HERE FOR "EXPLORATORY TALKS" AND THAT, IN ANY CASE, A NEW CONCORDAT COULD NOT BE FORMALLY NEGOTIATED UNTIL PORTUGAL HAS A PERMANENT GOVERNMENT, PORTUGUESE EMBASSY GIVES US DEFINITE IMPRESSION THAT GOP DETERMINED TO GO AHEAD WITH PLANS TO INTRODUCE DIVORCE BEFORE SPRING ELECTIONS. PORTUGUESE CHURCH IS SEEMINGLY OUTSIDE OF THIS DIALOGUE.

2. COMMENT: IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW GOP AND HOLY SEE CAN REALLY EXPECT TO "NEGOTIATE" AWAY ARTICLE 24. PORTUGUESE HAVE
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OBVIOUSLY MADE UP THEIR MINDS ABOUT DIVORCE AND, IN FACE OF ALL

HISTORICAL ODDS AGAINST ITS SUCCEEDING, ARE ATTEMPTING TO WORK WITH HOLY SEE TO INTRODUCE DIVORCE IN PORTUGAL. HOLY SEE IS UNDER CONSIDERABLE ASSAULT ON DIVORCE, ABORTION, BIRTH CONTROL, AND OTHER RELATED FAMILY ISSUES IN MANY COUNTRIES, INCLUDING ITALY AND FRANCE. OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE UNILATERALLY GONE THEIR OWN WAY IN FACE OF CHURCH OPPOSITION WITH INTENTION TO RENEGOTIATE THEIR RESPECTIVE CONCORDATS AT A LATER TIME WHEN DUST HAS SETTLED AND ANIMOSITIES MAY HAVE SOMEWHAT COOLED. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS NO ALTERNATIVE TO STATING ITS OPPOSITION TO INTRODUCTION OF DIVORCE IN PORTUGAL, AND THE ARGUMENT THAT DIVORCE IN PORTUGAL IS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION AND THAT CHURCH MAY DO MUCH TO IMPROVE ITS IMAGE BY NOT OPPOSING THE ISSUE HAVE LITTLE IMPORTANCE, ACCORDING TO OUR VATICAN CONTACTS. THE GENERAL OPINION IN VATICAN CIRCLES IS THAT GOP WILL END UP UNILATERALLY INTRODUCING DIVORCE AND TRY LATER TO RENEGOTIATE THE CONCORDAT. VOLPE

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